THE EYE:

BY OBADIAH OPTIC.

——*VARIOUS OBJECTS FROM THE SENSE,*
VARIOUSLY REPRESENTING. MILTON.

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Omnia plena Jovis. VIR. ——GOD is omnipresent.

I HAD just laid aside my cap and slippers, on friday morning last, and set myself quietly down in my elbow chair to read some communications from my friends, when my sister *Sarah* entered:—I immediately saw, by the turn of her countenance, that all was not right, when thus she accosted me.—Well brother, I think you might have spared your own sister, and not exposed her as you have done, in your last number. Indeed sister, I meant no harm. I believe you brother—but at least you might not have given my name; the opinion might have done. As to the name, sister, it is of very little consequence; our opinions are, properly speaking, a concern between GOD and ourselves, and whether the world approves of them or not, affects not their purity. Your peculiarities which were noticed, my dear sister, you know I have always combated, because they have a tendency to lead us from the Author of intelligence himself, and from that revelation which he has given, and to fix our attention on stocks, stones, and inferiour animals; besides, they lay open the mind to all that superstition which it was the great object of the founders of our holy religion to destroy. Before the promulgation of the gospel, the world was, according to the ideas of the superstitious, full of subordinate deities. The waters were peopled with naiades, the mountains and woods with satyrs, nymphs, and muses; the country and groves, had their hamadryades; nay, even the trees of the wood gave oracles; omens of good or evil fortune were taken from the flight of birds, the sound of thunder to the right or left, the meeting of animals, the entrails of slain beasts, and thousands of other things, which all produced that extention of idolatry in which the world was obscured for so many ages.—From these chains of darkness we were set at liberty by the light of the gospel—

the doctrine of a general and particular providence was inculcated and enforced, and the Christian taught to despise the groveling idea of gods of the hills, spirits of the vale, and naiades of the stream. He was taught to consider the Author of his existence as the sovereign disposer of all events, and with respect to futurity to be thoroughly resigned to his divine will. To raise my feeble voice against superstition, sister, I made mention of your opinions: Examine them, I pray you, well; I know the goodness of your heart, and you will find that these notions are the remains of pagan idolatry. I myself feel the lasting, and almost unconquerable influence of early prejudices: Our nurses' stories of ghosts, yet haunt my imagination: I feel their effects; as I pass the church yard, in the darkness of night, an awful solemnity steals upon me; I cast my eyes on the tomb-stones, and oftimes have I turned with a degree of trepidation at the pattering walk of my dog behind me. O my dear sister, we are weak mortals, how vain is our boasted philosophy, when thus phantoms of the imagination can disturb us; when the receptacles of the silent dead can fill with fear; when the howling of a dog can torment, and we be made cowards by the slow working of a worm! If, when *Peter* sank in the midst of the boisterous billows, he deserved, as he assuredly did, the censure of "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" how much more are we censurable, who, in the full blaze of gospel day, suffer such minute, nay, insensible objects to withdraw our confidence from the Govenour of the universe, without whose cognizance not even a sparrow can fall to the ground.

Let a sense of the divine influence and presence, my sister, be ever imprinted on our hearts, and superstition, tho' even fostered by early education, will lose its power. For this purpose, let me present you the following hymn written by Mr. MERRICK:

O THOU, whose all disposing sway,
The heav'ns, the earth and seas obey;
Whose might through all extent extends, [transcends:
Sinks through all depths, all heights
From earth's low margin to the skies
Now bids the pregnant vapours rise;
The light'ning's pallid sheet expands, [lands.
And glads with show'rs the furrow'd
Now from thy store house built on high
Permits the imprison'd winds to fly,
And guided by thy will to sweep,
The surface of the foaming deep:
Thee do we praise eternal king,
Of life and good th' exhaustless spring,
To thee our cheerful voices raise,
What theme so well deserves our praise?

After I had read it, I presented her the book and she withdrew in silence.

OBADIAH OPTIC.

ORIGINAL.

THE AMERICAN IDLER.—No. IV.

——————Behold, fond man!
See here thy pictur'd life; pass some few years,
Thy flow'ring spring, thy summer's ardent strength,
Thy sober autumn fading into age,
And pale concluding winter comes at last,
And shuts the scene. THOMSON.

IT was a maxim of that profound observer of human nature, the Duke de la ROCHEFOUCAULT, that "Old age gives good advice, when it is no longer able to give bad example."

There is a truth in this observation, which comes home to the heart of every person of feeling and reflection, with a force that could only arise from its correctness. Old age counsels not alone by the precepts of wisdom and experience, which long life and extensive knowledge of the world enable it sometimes to dictate, and which, as the season of warring passions is passed away, enable it to view things through the medium of reason and impartiality; but it more eloquently speaks by its grey hairs, and the various infirmities that follow in its train, than could CICERO or DEMOSTHENES with all the graces of elocution, and all the powers of oratory. When we trace the progress of man (as elegantly described by the author of my motto) from the spring of life to the meridian of manhood, and from thence to the winter of his days, which is the closing scene of time; we arrive at a point to stop, to look back, to consider; and what will be the result? we shall find the stamp of humanity on all his actions, and in the end, often see him sink into childish inanity.

There is nothing more depressing in its tendency, or more humiliating in its effects, than the thought of the imbecility, the weakness and decripitude, superinduced by old age. Great talents, mighty genius, minds that could soar above the petty weaknesses of life, "and almost leave mortality behind," when the "day-spring of youth," and strength of manhood, invigorated their bodies and gave energy to the soul, when age, with "stealing steps," overtakes them, sink into nothingness, and remain melancholy proofs that man is poor, abject, and mortal.

In life's last scene what prodigies suprise,
Fears from the brave, and follies from the wise!
From MARLB'ROUGH's eyes the streams of dotage flow,
And SWIFT expires a driv'ler and a show. JOHNSON.

Philosophers and moralists have often remarked the fondness for life which is inherent in man, and the anxiety he will evince to stretch unto the greatest length his days, which (if we may believe the experience of SOLOMON) "are few and evil," at best. "Those," says DR. JOHNSON, "who live long, must expect to outlive all whom they love and honour;" and if to the mournful situation of being an inhabitant of a world in which none are left to interest, and consequently none to please or comfort us, we add the weakness which age brings along with it; the tottering frame, the palsied nerve, the faltering tongue, the imbecile mind—what is left for hope to exhilarate or joy to brighten?—Oh thou, whatever be thy situation or talents, who art arrived at the decline of life, and still dost bend every faculty of thy soul to purposes of avarice, ambition, or pleasure, who art wasting the present time in actions neither profitable to others, or beneficial to thyself;—view one on whom time has worked this comfortless change; listen to his silent, though impressive monition; it will check desire, depress the rising impulses of the passions, and it will haply sink thee into that state of humiliation, which becomes thy age and character.

But this view of old age is but a partial survey. It is not always accompanied by these distressful attendants, which scatter such direful destruction; but many pass along the downhill of life, sinking by gradual, and often almost imperceptible degrees, retaining their faculties unhurt, and though the ardent passions die away, enough of the fire of youth remains to make them interesting and respectable. They look around the scene of life with satisfaction, and though they see views engaging the busy part of mankind, far different from what they were accustomed to, yet they can find amusement in tracing the various mutations of versatile man; they can console themselves with the reflection, that the immortal, irradiating principles of virtue are always the same; that while their conduct is regulated by it, they are venerated and estimated; and that at last they will sink in peace, and rise to superiour greatness, and unspotted glory. This is the desirable conclusion all would be willing to make, this the end all would wish to come to. Happy would it be if human frailty could be so corrected, if earthly passions could be so controuled, and self knowledge so attained, that each one might, in time, lay up resources against the day when age fixes his hand upon him. Happy would it be if the retrospect of life could always be looked at, as on days and years so spent as to

excite exhilarating impressions, philanthropical emotions and dignified sensations. Each one may and ought to make the attempt to arrive thus near perfection, and though he must inevitably fall far short of *that mark*, let him continually keep it in view through his pilgrimage, and at the close, his reflections will compensate him for all the difficulties encountered, and all the damages incurred. J.

ORIGINAL.

THE SPECTACLES.—No. IV.

Nimirum sapere est abjectis utile nugis. HOR.

AS I was preparing another object for "*The Eye*," the following communication was delivered by one who seems interested for her sex, which without further delay I send for insertion.

MR. SPECS,

As you have announced your intention of attacking the fashions, it is not to be expected that my sex will escape your censure; but I wish you to be cautious that the glasses in your spectacles do not magnify; there is no doubt but you have taken care that they will not diminish: As to the fashions, you may as well omit the many canvassed topics, such as the bare arms and thin dresses of the ladies, which have undergone much examination, and all efforts to amend them proved fruitless. AMELIA.

My fair correspondent need not be concerned about the qualities of my glasses; unless my spectacles should *fall off*, or be broken by some unforeseen accident, the *plane* glasses will remain: The quantity of the ladies' dresses is to be apportioned accordingly to the weather, which is a much more cogent monitor than I should be: But as AMELIA has suggested the ladies to my consideration, I will make one of their pursuits, (tho' the gentlemen are not exempt) the subject of my present number.

Novel reading is a dangerous and destructive habit, it steals upon us imperceptibly, and soon becomes so far confirmed, that it is irradicable. Novels teach us what society might be, not what it is; they lead us to expect more from others than can be given; and our distaste for the enjoyment of social intercourse is proportionably less. I cannot help citing in confirmation of this, what the author of "The World" has advanced with an elegance peculiar to himself, "Since the happiness of mankind is so deeply interested in the sentiments and conduct

of the ladies, why do we contribute to their filling their heads with fancies which render them incapable either of enjoying or communicating that happiness? Why do we suffer those hearts, which ought to be appropriated to the various affections of social life, to be alienated by the mere creatures of imagination? In short, why do we suffer those who were born for the purpose of living in society, with men endued with passions and frailties like their own, to be bred up in the daily expectation of being out of it, with such men as never existed?" Novels frequently present to us vice in a captivating form; the villain dies an honourable death, after he has triumphed over virtuous characters; and virtue is uniformly reduced to beggary before it meets its reward.

To novels may be attributed the ignorance of our females: History and biography are sacrificed to the stories of romantic lovers; a writer is sure to be encouraged who collects a parcel of characters, and selecting two who at first sight fall violently in love; a tyrannical father, a cruel step-mother, an envious sister or a merciless brother is opposed to the union; they ramble through verdant meads, pass dreadful nights in half decayed castles near ghosts or banditti; wander along trackless deserts, encounter the fury of the elements, escape death in all it forms; sometimes meet by accident and are parted by violence; at last, some improbable event unites them; they are happy, and we hear no more of them. While he who relates real facts, and shews us what the world has been, and what it is, is left untouched. "I think" says HUME "it an unpardonable ignorance in persons of *whatever sex or condition*, not to be acquainted with the histories of their own country, along with the histories of ancient Greece and Rome." How many of our beaux and belles are ignorant of history; libraries of novels are almost worn out by use, while a book-case of literature is unsullied. There is scarcely a novel that does not abound with obscenity and vice. A selection cannot be easily made of novels, though undoubtedly there are some few which may be read without injury; the use is so intimately connected with the abuse, that it becomes dangerous to taste the delicious fare, when satiety cannot be expected.

I shall defer further remarks, with an observation of DR. BLAIR—"And though in general, it ought to be admitted, that characteristical novels, formed upon nature and upon life, without extravagance and without licentiousness, might furnish an agreeable and useful entertainment to the mind; yet, according as these writings have been, for the most part, conducted,

it must also be confessed, that they oftener tend to dissipation and idleness than any good purpose." T.

MUSHROOM.—No. II.

AS it is customary for all writers, whether gentle or simple, titled or untitled, to give an account of themselves to those for whom they write, it would be the extreme of cruelty in me to keep my fair readers, and my brown ones too, in ignorance of the biography of the personage to whom they had a partial introduction in the preceding number.

As what I have already written may be considered as a very pretty *modern* preface, I shall commence the history.

My father was a farmer, with more reputation than wealth, in the county of ****, fifty miles from the city; as his farm, though small, yielded rather more than sufficient for the support of his family, he was determined to give his only child a good education, I was accordingly, at the age of fifteen, taken from the rustic school in which my father had been birched forty years before, and sent to an academy at the county town.

As I was of a delicate constitution, my mother gave strict orders, that I should be kept from the morning dew, the evening air, and above all, the scorching sun at noon: In consequence, I was immured in the master's study, while my school fellows were at play—they laughed and learned—my spirits flagged—my health suffered, and my mind improved but little. I was suffered to *go out* annually to see my friends, and my school bill as regularly *went in*. By the number of these mementos (which my father regularly filed and put into his desk among peach-stones, apple-seeds and other things that were to produce him fruit *hereafter*) he concluded I had learning enough; and, as I surpassed the neighbouring children (in his opinion) in abilities, he, at the instigation of my mother, placed me with Dr. **** to study physic: with him I had more liberty, but not much more content than at school: Though I was a little farther removed from my mother's jurisdiction, her *fondness* persecuted me even here; "you must now hold up your head," would she tell me when on my sunday's visits to the homestead, "you are now raised above your former playmates; remember you are learning to be a doctor; do not demean yourself by being too free with those around you; keep yourself to yourself." And thus was I a prisoner, though at large; the wake, the fair, the

Sweeping ten thousand worlds around,
Wrapt in mystery profound,
Follow'd by a blazing train
Which makes the nations tremble and adore
That dread creative pow'r
Which bids them shine amidst the starry train,
That pow'r that ever reign'd, and still shall reign;
Supreme o'er earth and skies,
Till comets, planets, worlds and time shall be no more.

Behold yon lofty arch of heav'nly blue,
How wide it spreads around,
Mocking the farthest view;
How awful, how serene,
Th' inimitable scene!
Behold those starry fires that glow
With purest light sublime,
That glow'd when earliest time
Began his long continued flight
When first created light
Burst on the dark chaotic night,
And ne'er shall cease for God hath bade them shine
(And who can alter the command divine)
Till creeping time has reach'd his utmost bound
And each majestic orb shall cease to roll around.
Suns whose diffusive light supplies
Worlds yet unseen by human eyes;
Say, speculative sages bold,
Are these refulgent orbs of gold
Which thus with everlasting glow,
Cheer night's obscure and gloomy brow,
How vast the universal plan,
How little man,
Whose wandering fancy dares to rove
Amidst the circling worlds, around, below, above.

But come too daring muse, descend
From this majestic height;
And thou observant eye attend,
To yonder awful sight.
See where vast piles of clouds the skies deform,
And roll along the muttering storm,
In terrible array;
There nature forms the awful fires
(Which hurl to earth the lofty spires)

Amidst the gloom that glaring flies,
That blackens all the skies,
And overwhelms the day.
The thunders which the heav'ns can shake,
And make earth's solid fabric quake,
Which with tremendous sound,
Roll through the night that reigns around.
Swift the rushing flood descends,
Low the aged forest bends,
The swelling torrents roar
Chafing th' inclosing shore,
And, bursting from their secret caves,
The whirlwinds wake the sleeping waves,
From their deepest beds they rage,
And seem with circling clouds to wage
An "elemental war."
Hark! with what a deaf'ning sound,
They from the groaning shores rebound!
While, in her gloomy car,
Pale horror sits enthroned,
And scatters devastation round.
But turning from the fearful sight,
See brighter scenes arise,
Dispell'd the horrors of the night,
Yon silver orb illumes the clearing skies;
Riding in unrivall'd splendour
In her azure path attend her,
Stars that now unfold
Their orbs of glittering gold,
On the dark clouds a flood of light they pour
That glows with splendour, soon to glow no more.
Look round the world, and if thou canst, survey
All the new wonders that salute the day;
Contemplate each, as nature marks the way;
See where yon mountains rear their lofty forms,
And rise in grandeur o'er the clouds and storms:
On their proud tops delightful calmness reigns,
While the storm scatters ruin o'er the plains;
Their ample sides with richest verdure glow,
While on their summits rests the mantling snow.
Hark! what sounds are these I hear,
Bursting on the astonish'd ear!

From yonder depths profound;
Clouds of smoke obscure the skies,
Deaf'ning thunders rock the ground
The livid light'ning flies.
O fearful sight! O heart appalling sound!
Clouds of smoke to heav'n aspire
And awful piles of fire.
Horror begins his reign,
An earthquake rends the mountain, heaves the plain;
Loud roars the far retiring main,
The firey torrent rolls along,
Fierce, glowing, terrible and strong;
Rocks burst, the forest flames, proud cities fall,
Hurl'd in tremendous ruin all.

Calmer scenes the eye invite,
The earth is quiet—hush'd the main;
From the mountain's dizzy height,
Now contemplate the fertile plain:
See what new wonders rise on every hand,
O'er the wide waste of waters, and the land;
There flourish groves that form romantic bowers;
There spread rich plains bestrew'd with fragrant flowers:
The yellow harvest waving with the breeze,
The feather'd host that animate the trees,
Whose various plumage the green groves adorn,
Whose mellow music hails the beams of morn;
The beasts that rove the plain and shelt'ring woods,
The streams that roll their plenty spreading floods;
The insects flitting in the sun's bright beams,
The fishes sporting in the seas and streams:
The glowing lustre of the heav'ns behold,
When ruddy morning opes her gates of gold;
When Sol's broad orb sinks in the bright'ning west,
And animated nature hastes to rest:
The seasons as they roll their ceaseless round
Shew marks of goodness and of skill profound.

But hold too daring muse—thy flight refrain,
Or chaos o'er my wand'ring mind will reign;
Too weak, too finite is thy pow'r t'embrace
The various wonders which my eye can trace.
Return ye wand'ring thoughts, and stray no more
Be silent—reverent—humble, and adore. ANACHARSIS.